

House Bill 199
February 16, 2007
Presented by Chris Smith
House Appropriations Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Chris Smith, Chief of Staff for Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

HB 199 directs FWP to establish an account and mechanism for people to donate private funds, including refunds of wildlife license fees to be used for acquisition of water-based recreational and fishing access sites. This bill allows the agency to place a marker at the site when a landowner donates the site to FWP.

Fishing Access Site acquisition is currently funded with \$.50 on resident and \$2.50 on nonresident fishing licenses. When this level of funding was first enacted in 1973, it generated enough spending power to acquire four or five new access sites annually. With today's increased land costs combined with increased demands for recreational lands such as for second home sites the purchasing power of these earmarked funds has been substantially decreased.

The funding created in HB 199 will help FWP secure additional water access sites for Montana recreators. Additionally, FWP supports the placement of a marker when a landowner donates a site to the Department. Generosity of that magnitude should not be overlooked. We urge your favorable consideration of HB 199.